



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION III  
1650 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029**

February 4, 2008

Mr. Gene Keller  
National Capital Planning Commission  
401 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
North Lobby  
Suite 500  
Washington, D. C. 20004

Re: Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African American History and Culture  
Draft Environmental Impact Statement December 2007 CEQ #20070529

Dear Mr. Keller:

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers the following comments regarding the National Museum of African American History and Culture Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Based on our review of the DEIS, EPA has rated the environmental impacts of the DEIS as "EC" (Environmental Concerns) and the adequacy of the impact statement as "2" (Insufficient Information). A copy of EPA's ranking system is enclosed for your reference. The basis for this rating is contained in the remainder of this letter. Since the build alternatives relate to the design of the actual museum, these comments apply to all Build Alternatives.

Project Purpose:

The purpose of the proposed action is to fulfill the mandate of the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act (NMAAHC Act) enacted by Congress on December 16, 2003. As directed by the Act, the site was selected by the Smithsonian Institution Board of Regents from four identified sites. These sites were: the Monument site, The Arts and Industries Building site, The Liberty Loan site, and the Banneker Overlook site.

The proposed action is to construct and operate a permanent facility on the Washington Monument Grounds in Washington, D.C. for the NMAAHC within the Smithsonian Institution on a five acre parcel bounded by Constitution Avenue on the north, Madison Drive on the south, 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW on the east, and 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW on the west.

Alternatives:

The Smithsonian Institute developed eight overarching principles that provided the



foundation for the development of alternatives, guided their refinement, and served as criteria against which the relative success of meeting the purpose and need was measured. These criteria are physical character/quality, mission and program, monumental context, urban design principles/ physical context, historical and cultural resources protection principles, visitor use/access principles/public amenities, visitor experience and access, functional principles/museum operation.

Six build alternatives and a No-Build Alternative are described in the DEIS. The build alternatives include Contextual Building Alignment, Washington Monument Orientation, Free Form, Terrace Roof, Enframing , and Low Profile. The DEIS states that this project is following a Tiered approach. Tier 1 includes the FEIS and Record of Decision. Tier 2 will be a more detailed analysis of impacts. The product for Tier 2 is assumed to be an Environmental Assessment.

Specific Comments:

All Build Alternatives should apply low impact development and green building technologies. This includes building grounds and operations.

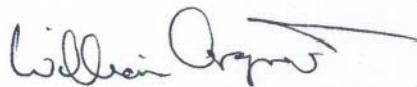
Additional information should be provided regarding the site selection. The DEIS states that the site selection process did not follow NEPA, however it appears that there was coordination with the public and other entities. The DEIS should also include a discussion of Environmental Justice and how Environmental Justice communities were addressed in the process and will be in future coordination.

The project team should work closely with the National Park Service and coordinate this effort with the new plan for the National Mall. The EIS should discuss the status of the Mall plan and how the projects fit together.

Section 6.5.6 states, "Use low sulfur diesel fuel in construction equipment". We suggest using ultra low sulfur diesel fuel and utilizing construction equipment that has been retrofitted with diesel particulate filters or other pollution control devices to lower the impact on local air quality.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments. If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Okorn at (215)814-3330.

Sincerely,



William Arguto  
Office of Environmental Programs  
NEPA Team Leader

